

Pharma focus

Ordering medicines from overseas



By **Leslie Morgan**, managing director Durbin Plc, UK, and Member of the British Royal Pharmaceutical Society

When you're ordering medicines from overseas, what's your priority? I'm sure your top two are quality and cost. Whether you're on a tight budget, or you need a medicine in a hurry, it's always satisfying to keep the costs as low as possible.

When you first place an enquiry, you will probably be quoted a price per unit. But, of course, to work out the final total, you can't simply take this unit price and multiply it by the quantity required. There are many different charges that can be added to the individual unit price, such as delivery charges, insurance and freight costs. And it's these extra charges that can dramatically change the total of your bill. Did you know, for instance, that an express, rather than a standard delivery, can

bump up the charges by hundreds of pounds?

As a buyer, it's definitely worth your while knowing what these charges are. Yet, it can be confusing, if not almost impossible, to work out what you're being charged for. So, let me share with you the industry's international IMCO terms – three-letter codes originally devised by the International Maritime Organisation to clarify responsibility between buyer and seller. When you receive a quote, you'll generally find one of these codes next to it – for example £500 per unit EXW. So what do these cryptic three-letter terms actually mean?

- EXW = Ex-Works (you have responsibility for collecting from your supplier's warehouse and arranging your own freight)
- FCA = Free Carrier (your

supplier arranges to deliver goods to your freight forwarder; you and your freight forwarder take full responsibility for the goods from that point)

FOB = Free on Board (your supplier arranges to load your goods onto a ship/aircraft to a stated destination; you take full responsibility for the goods from that point)

• CPT = Carriage Paid To (your supplier arranges freighting of the goods to you directly to the agreed destination; it is recommended that you insure the goods in case products are lost or damaged in transit; until recently CPT was known as CFR and C&F)

• CIP = Freight Carriage & Insurance Paid (same as CPT plus appropriate insurance on your behalf against damage or loss of the goods in transit; CIP used to be known as CIF).

Being familiar with these codes will help you make the most cost-effective decisions when you next make an order. And another money-smart suggestion? If you're buying from separate suppliers in the same country, consolidate the order and have it shipped as one order. At Durbin, we often buy from other companies on a customer's behalf and then freight the goods together. We're more than happy to help our customers save money! ■

Durbin PLC is a British company based in South Harrow, London. Established in 1963, the company specialises in supplying quality assured pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and consumable supplies to healthcare professionals and aid agencies in over 145 countries. As well as reacting rapidly to emergency situations, Durbin PLC responds to healthcare supply needs from local project level to national scale programmes. Email: L.morgan@durbin.co.uk